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The Irish Question.

HOW THE UNION WAS CARRIED.

BY

GEORGE COFFEY, B.L., M.R.I.A.

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HOW THE UNION WAS CARRIED.

I.—BY BRIBERY.

“IT is, I believe, a simple and unexaggerated statement of the truth that, in the entire history of representative government, there is no instance of corruption having been applied on so large a scale, and with so audacious an effrontery, as by the Ministers in Ireland.”—(*Lecky, Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland*, p. 177).

On the first proposal of the Legislative Union, a great meeting of the members of the Irish Bar was held (Dec. 15, 1798), at which a resolution condemning the measure was carried by 166 to 32! At the close of 1803 there were but *five* members of the minority of 32 who had not received appointments from Government.—(*Cornwallis Correspondence*, Vol. iii. 18).

Twenty-two Irish peers were created, five peers received English titles, and twenty higher steps in the peerage.

£1,260,000 was distributed to the borough owners under the guise of ‘compensation.’ In 1832, when the *English nomination boroughs* were abolished, the suggestion that the owners of this corrupt class of property should be compensated was repudiated by all parties.

The sums expended in other forms of bribery will never be fully known, but the application of corruption on a scale of which, as Lecky says, “in the entire history of representative government there is no instance,” was notorious. So late as the 19th February, 1801, the Lord Lieutenant (Lord Cornwallis) wrote to the Duke of Portland requesting his Grace to take the earliest opportunity of conferring with his Majesty’s ministers, and furnish him “with an official authority to assure all those gentlemen who have any promise of favour in consequence of the Union that they will be

fully provided for according to the extent of the engagements made with them."

The promises referred to in this letter were recorded in a list enclosed, which the editor of the *Cornwallis Correspondence* does not think it advisable to publish in full. Of these engagements in consideration of the Union, *six* were for pensions, *thirteen* were legal appointments, *four* promotions in the peerage, and *thirty* promises of places from £400 to £800 a year, or pensions of from £300 to £500. *Thirty-five of the persons mentioned in the list were M.P.'s and had voted for the Union.*—(*Cornwallis Correspondence*, Vol. iii. 340).

Of the 162 members of the Irish House of Commons who voted for the Union in the decisive division, Feb. 5, 1800, *no less than 116 were placemen.*

An audacious attempt has been made to deny the corruption by which the Union was carried. Fortunately, ample evidence survives to refute such impudent assertion out of the mouths of the chief agents of the Government. The published letters of the Lord Lieutenant (Lord Cornwallis) and of his Chief Secretary (Lord Castlereagh) establish the systematic and avowed use of bribery beyond the possibility of question.

In January, 1799, Lord Castlereagh sent to the Duke of Portland an analysis of an unfavourable division on the subject of the Union, in which occur the entries:—

"Against, or absent enemies	...	...	...	129
Of these, <i>might be bought off</i>	...	...	...	20."

—(*Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 45).

June 19, 1799, Lord Cornwallis wrote to General Ross—

"If Lord D[ownshire] declares against us, many of our recruits will insist on higher bounty.—*Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 103.

June 21, 1800, Lord Castlereagh wrote to his Under Secretary, Mr. Cooke—

"If they [the Ministry] imagine they can take up popular grounds by disappointing their supporters, and by disgracing the Irish Government, I think they will find themselves mistaken. It will be no secret what has been promised, and by what means the Union has been secured. Disappointment will encourage, not prevent, disclosure, and the only effect of such a proceeding on their part will be to add the weight of their testimony

to that of the anti-Unionists in proclaiming *the profligacy of the means by which the measure has been accomplished.*"—*Castlereagh Correspondence*, iii. 330.

In the face of these letters, that bribery was applied without stint or scruple does not admit of doubt or discussion.

II.—BY TORTURE AND OUTRAGE.

The country was under Martial Law. Public opinion was held down in the iron grasp of what was practically an army of occupation, numbering 137,000 men.* Opposition to the Government was treated as open or secret treason.

The Duke of Portland, writing to Lord Cornwallis, January 17, 1799, a few days after the defeat of the measure in that year, stated that he was directed to desire the Lord Lieutenant to "take care that it should be understood that it [the Union] neither is nor ever will be abandoned, and that the support of it will be considered as a *necessary and indispensable test of the attachment on the part of the Irish to their connexion with this country.*"—*Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 47.

The spirit in which this direction was understood by the agents of the Government in Ireland may be inferred from the facts disclosed at the trial of an action brought by a Mr. Bernard Wright against the High Sheriff of Tipperary, Clonmel Assizes, March 14, 1799. The trial and subsequent proceedings are fully reported in Howell's State Trials, Vol. 27. The facts were shortly these—

Wright, hearing the High Sheriff had expressed an intention of arresting him, went, accompanied by a friend, to surrender himself to the High Sheriff. Whereon, without any form of trial or investigation whatsoever, the High Sheriff sentenced Wright to *five*

* See Lord Castlereagh's speech on military estimates in the Irish House of Commons, Feb. 18, 1799. The actual figures were:—

Regulars	...	...	...	32,281
Militia	...	...	...	26,634
Yeomanry	...	...	...	51,274
English Militia	...	...	...	24,201
Artillery	...	...	...	1,500
Commissariat	...	...	...	1,700

137,590

There is reason to believe the number was increased in 1800. (Quoted from Madden's "United Irishmen.")

hundred lashes, and then to be shot. The flogging was carried out under circumstances of great barbarity. Major Riall, one of the witnesses at the trial, deposed :—

“That he did not arrive at the place of carrying the flogging into effect before Wright had received fifty lashes. The High Sheriff produced two papers, one of which, being in French, he [the Sheriff] did not understand, but gave it to him to read, as containing matter that furnished ground for the flogging. Witness read the paper, and returned it saying that it was in no wise treasonable ; that it was from a French gentleman, the Baron de Clues, making an excuse for not keeping an appointment, being obliged to wait on Sir Laurence Parsons. *Wright, however, was flogged after witness had explained the nature of the letter to the High Sheriff.* Witness then went away.”

The jury found a verdict for the plaintiff for £500. The High Sheriff thereon petitioned the Irish House of Commons “praying to be indemnified for certain acts done by him in the suppression of the late rebellion,” and the proposed Bill of Indemnity was *supported by the Government.* The Under Secretary (Mr. E. Cooke) bore testimony to “the national services performed by the petitioner.” The Attorney-General also defended the petitioner.

The Hon. Mr. Yelverton opposed the Bill of Indemnity, read the letter shown to Major Riall, and stated that notwithstanding this translation, which Major Riall read to the High Sheriff,

“He ordered fifty more lashes to be inflicted, and with such peculiar severity that, horrid to relate, the intestines of the bleeding man could be perceived convulsed through his wounds. . . . *He then left the man bleeding and suspended, while he went to the barracks to demand a file of men to come and shoot him ;* but being refused by the general, he ordered him back to prison, where he was confined in a small dark room, with no other furniture than a wretched pallet of straw, without covering, and here he remained six or seven days without any medical assistance.”

The Hon. F. Hely Hutchinson stated “*he was himself present*” when similar acts were committed by the High Sheriff, “whose zeal had led him to deeds of horror.” The Bill of Indemnity, however, was passed. The High Sheriff then applied to the Court of Exchequer to set aside the verdict, but, to the honour of the court, the application was refused with full costs. The system of corruption and intimidation by which the Union was secured is summed up in the concluding note to the report of the case in Howell’s State Trials :—

“The defendant in this case afterwards received a considerable pension for his active services in quelling the rebellion ; he was also created a baronet of the United Kingdom.”—Vol. 27, p. 759.

I have selected the above case as an illustration of the spirit in which the policy of "law and order" was carried out by the officers of the Government in the years immediately preceding the Union. It is not by any means one of the worst cases. The records of torture and outrage are sickening reading. Floggings, half-hangings, the pitchcap, picketing, were the usual modes of extracting information. Lord Moria, referring to the state of Ireland in the English House of Lords, 22nd Nov., 1797, stated:—

"What I have to speak of are not solitary and insolated measures, nor partial abuses, but what is adopted as the system of government; I do not talk of a casual system, but of one *deliberately determined upon and regularly persevered in.*"

"When a man was taken up on suspicion, *he was put to the torture; nay if he were merely accused of concealing the guilt of another. The rack, indeed, was not at hand, but the punishment of picketing was in practice. . . . He had known a man, in order to extort confession of a supposed crime, or of that of some of his neighbours, picketed until he actually fainted; picketed a second time until he fainted again; as soon as he came to himself, picketed a third time, until he once more fainted: and all upon mere suspicion! Nor was this the only species of torture; many had been taken and hung up until they were half dead, unless they made confession of the imputed guilt. These were not particular acts of cruelty, exercised by men abusing the power committed to them, but they formed a part of our system.*—Madden, *Lives of United Irishmen*, Vol. i. 300.

Mr. Reynolds admits, in the Life of his Father, Thomas Reynolds, of Kildare (an active agent in the suppression of the insurrection), the flogging by loyalist partisans of "suspected persons, and *throwing salt into their wounds to extort confession;*" also such acts as the "burning of the rebel hospital in Enniscorthy, with all the rebel sick and wounded it contained, to the number of above thirty persons," and "the slaughter of upwards of two hundred men [Sir R. Musgrave puts it at 350] after they had surrendered on terms of capitulation to General Dundas, on the Curragh of Kildare." (Vol. i. p. 212).

The Rev. Mr. Gordon, Protestant Rector of Killegney, in his "History of the Rebellion," relates the following incident at page 212:—

"Many instances might be given of men, who, at the hazard of their own lives, concealed and maintained loyalists until the storm passed away. On the other hand, many might be given of cruelties committed by persons not natives of Ireland. I shall mention only one act, not of what I shall call cruelty, since no pain was inflicted, but ferocity, not calculated to soften the rancour of the insurgents. Some soldiers of the Ancient British

regiment cut open the dead body of Father Michael Murphy, after the battle of Arklow, took out his heart, roasted his body, and oiled their boots with the grease which dripped from it."

Dr. Madden, in his "Lives of the United Irishmen"—a most trustworthy authority—says, at page 319, Vol. i., first series:—

"On the 21st of June, 1798, the town of Enniscorthy having been retaken by the King's troops, the house in which the sick and wounded of the rebel party were placed was set on fire and above thirty of the unfortunate inmates perished. The Hessian troops distinguished themselves particularly on this occasion. The Rev. James Gordon, a Protestant clergyman, in speaking of this atrocious proceeding, says he was 'informed by a surgeon that the burning was accidental, the bed-clothes being set on fire by the wadding of the soldiers' guns, who were shooting the patients in their beds.'"

From these acts of savagery may be inferred the outrages on women, and all the nameless atrocities to which the peasantry were subjected, in the name of martial law, by soldiery and yeomanry inflamed by anti-Irish and anti-Catholic prejudice.

But enough has been said to show the spirit which animated the partisans of "law and order" at the time of the Union, and the methods by which the country was cowed into passive submission—not acquiescence—to the destruction of the Irish Parliament. If further testimony is desired, the words of the Lord Lieutenant, the head of the Government in Ireland, must be taken as conclusive, Writing to Major-General Ross, July 24, 1798, Lord Cornwallis says:

"The whole country is in such a state that I feel frightened and ashamed whenever I consider that I am looked upon as being at the head of it. Except in the instance of the six state trials that are going on here, there is no law either in town or country but martial law, and you know enough of that to see all the horrors of it. . . . But all this is trifling compared to the numberless murders that are hourly committed by our people without any process of examination whatever. . . . The conversation of the principal persons of the country all tend to encourage this system of blood, and the conversation, even at my table, where you will suppose I do all I can to prevent it, always turns on hanging, shooting, burning, &c., &c., and if a priest has been put to death the greatest joy is expressed by the whole company."—*Cornwallis Correspondence*, Vol. ii. 369.

The evidence is brought up to date in a subsequent letter, dated the 16th Nov., 1799 (the decisive division on the Union was 5th Feb., 1800), in which occurs the significant passage: "The vilest informers are hunted out from prisons to attack, by the most barefaced perjury, the lives of all who are suspected of being, or having been disaffected; and, indeed, every Roman Catholic of influence is in the greatest danger."

It will be said that the atrocities committed in the suppression of the rebellion were excited by, and in retaliation for, those committed by the insurgents at Scullabogue, Vinegar Hill, and the Bridge of Wexford. Terrible deeds those were. But they were almost isolated acts, committed at the close of the insurrection by the stragglers of a defeated and disorganised peasant army. Abundant evidence exists that the insurgent leaders used every effort to check outrage. Dr. Madden quotes "general orders" and proclamations to that effect. Lord Cornwallis' letter shows that the conduct of the "principal persons" on the "loyalist" side, on the contrary, excited rather than restrained the outrages perpetrated by the adherents of the Government. But, setting aside the fact that the atrocities of the insurgents were more than equalled by those of the "loyalists," to speak of the latter as provoked by the rebels is simply to read history backward. The passage quoted from Lord Moira's speech in 1797 shows what was going on in Ireland, in the name of government, before the insurrection broke out, and the testimony of Lord Holland and of Lord Cornwallis establishes that the people of Ireland were *driven* into rebellion by the cruelties practised on them by the partisans of the Government faction. In his *Memoirs of the Whig Party*, Lord Holland states :

"The fact is incontrovertible, that the people of Ireland were driven to resistance, which, possibly, they meditated before, by the free quarters and expenses of the soldiery, which were such as are not permitted in civilised warfare, even in an enemy's country. Trials, if they must so be called, were carried on without number under martial law Floggings, picketings—death, were the usual sentences, and these were sometimes commuted into banishment, serving in the fleet, or transference to a foreign service. Many were sold at so much a head to the Prussians. Other more legal, but not less horrible, outrages were daily committed by the different corps under the command of Government."

Lord Cornwallis, the responsible head of the Government in Ireland, writing to Major-General Ross, Nov. 16, 1799, thus unmistakably adds his testimony :

"You will have seen by the addresses both in the North and South that any attempt to moderate that violence and cruelty which has once driven, and which, if tolerated, must again soon drive, this wretched country into rebellion, is not reprobated by the voice of the country, although it has appeared so culpable in the eyes of the absentees."—(*Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 144).

III.—BY FRAUD.

The Union was carried without a dissolution. The Irish Parliament was manifestly incompetent to pass the Union without appealing to the constituencies. It was returned to legislate for the country; it had no power to transfer that duty to another body.

After the defeat of the measure in 1799, the Opposition called again and again for a dissolution. Twenty-eight counties, twenty of them being unanimous, had petitioned against the Union, and the petitions against it are said by Lecky (a "Unionist") "to have had more than 700,000 signatures, while those in its favour had only 7,000."

Dr. Dunbar Ingram, in his "History of the Legislative Union of Great Britain and Ireland," a "Unionist" handbook, published in 1887, admits that of the petitions presented to the House of Commons forty-six were against the measure, and only *two* in its favour. He naively adds—The Unionists "naturally avoided the Commons, and preferred to make their sentiments known in county declarations, or addresses to the Lord Lieutenant or the King." Dr. Ingram quietly ignores, however, the fact of the numerical difference in the signatures.

7,000 is the highest estimate that has been placed on the signatures in favour of the Union. Mr. Grey (afterwards Lord Grey) stated in the English House of Commons that 707,000 had signed against, and only 3,000 for the measure.—(Cobbett's *Parliamentary History*, xxxv. p. 66). And Lord Castlereagh himself admits that the petitions against the Union were more numerously signed than the declarations and addresses in its favour. Writing, April 2, 1800, he says :

"It may be useful that Mr. Pitt should be in possession of the declarations and petitions which have at different times appeared on either side. I have therefore the honour of enclosing a list of each. The petitions presented to Parliament have been more numerously signed than the addresses and declarations in favour of the measure, which were in general *studiously confined to a superior description of persons*; but the preponderance of property is undoubtedly on the side of the latter . . . I think we are fully warranted in asserting that, *however the numbers may stand*, the measure has been supported by a majority of the well-attached proprietors."—*Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii., 224.

That 700,000 should have been found courageous enough to

openly sign against the Union shows how intense the feeling was against the measure. The country was under martial law. Opposition was looked on as disaffection. The vilest informers were hunted out from prisons to attack by perjury the lives of those suspected of being disaffected. Every Roman Catholic of influence was in the greatest danger.—(Lord Cornwallis to Major-General Ross, Nov. 16, 1799). Add to this that the Government party used every effort, through sheriffs of counties and others, to discourage petitions against the Union, and to promote declarations and addresses in its favour. In this they were actively seconded by the Castle itself; indeed, the Lord Lieutenant promoted addresses in favour of the Union in the most unblushing manner. Writing to the Duke of Portland, June 22, 1799, Lord Cornwallis thus openly speaks on the subject:

“I have most earnestly recommended it to the friends of the Government to exert themselves during the summer in their respective counties, and have urged them, *without risking popular meetings*, to obtain declarations similar to those of Cork and Galway, favourable to the measure. The effort necessary to procure these declarations has roused our friends to exertion, and inspired them with proportionable zeal; and we find in the counties in which it has been successfully tried, that it has been not less useful in pledging individuals in favour of the measure than in disposing the timid to declare themselves.—*Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii., 104.

Mr. Cooke (Under-Secretary) wrote to Lord Castlereagh, Sept. 18, 1799:—

“We have a Catholic declaration from Longford. I am promoting one in Roscommon.”

Lord Castlereagh went so far as to send a draft address to the Catholic Bishop of Meath for signature in that diocese. (See Appendix).

Cooke's Longford address was repelled by the Catholics of that county (January 25, 1800), who declared their “full and entire approbation of the manly and liberal resolutions of the Roman Catholics of Dublin.” And upwards of 6,000 signatures were appended in the course of a few days.—(*Two Centuries of Irish History*, p. 192).

We get a glimpse of the state of feeling in Mayo in a letter from Lord Altamont, dated Westport, June 5, 1799:

“If the Roman Catholics stand forward, it will be unwillingly; they are keeping back decidedly, but many will be influenced, and some few who

connected themselves with the Protestants during the disturbance will be zealously forward on the present occasion. The priests have all offered to sign; and, though I am not fond of many of them as associates, I will take their signatures to prevent a possibility of a counter-declaration. I hear the titular Archbishop has expressed himself inclined to the measure. This day I have sent round to all the Catholics of property in the country. I may be mistaken, but in my judgment the wish of most of them would be to stand neuter; or perhaps, if they had any countenance, to oppose it—that is the fact. Several will sign from influence, some from fear; but the majority, I believe, will pretend that they have given their opinions already, and can't decently retract them.—*Gastlereagh Correspondence*, ii., 327.

But, notwithstanding the exertions of the Government, they were only able to obtain, on the highest estimate, 7,000 signatures to addresses and declarations in favour of the Union. This fact compels the conclusion that the mass of the people, Protestant and Catholic, were against the measure.

The petitions will be found set forth in the *Dublin Evening Post*, 1800. One of the resolutions embodied in the petition of the County of Dublin will be read with special interest at the present time:

Resolved—"That by a separate, independent Parliament, we do not understand a separate interest from Great Britain, on the contrary, we are convinced that such a Legislature is absolutely necessary to maintain and preserve inviolate our connexion with that nation."

The merchants, manufacturers, and traders protested against the measure. At a meeting of the Master Manufacturers in the woollen, cotton, silk and mixed branches, held in the Weavers' Hall, Dublin, January 21, 1800, the following resolutions were passed unanimously:

"1st. That previous to the year 1782, while the Parliament of Great Britain *assumed* a control over the Parliament of this country, our manufactures were in a languishing and decayed state."

"2nd. That since that period, having had the benefit of enjoying the parental care and solicitude of a resident Parliament, the manufactures of Ireland have increased in a rapid manner."

"3rd. That we behold with anxious concern any attempt to deprive us of that Parliament, and submit the regulation of our manufactures to the Parliament of another country, under whose *partial* influence they had been nearly annihilated."—(*Dublin Evening Post*, January 27, 1800).

The Corporations of the Cutlers, Painter-stainers and Stationers, the Goldsmiths, Carpenters, Coopers, &c., passed similar resolutions. Lord Cornwallis wrote to the Duke of Portland, January, 21, 1800:

"The guild of merchants have entered into strong resolutions against the measure of the Union, couched in the most insidious language, urging strenuously a coalition of all sects in opposition to it, and offering their

warmest thanks to 'their Roman Catholic fellow-citizens' in Dublin for their manly and patriotic conduct."—*Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 168.

It has been frequently asserted during the present Home Rule controversy that the Catholics of Ireland favoured the Union, and that the measure was passed in their interest. This assertion is based mainly on letters of certain Catholic Archbishops and Bishops, in which they express themselves in favour of the Union, published in the *Castlereagh Correspondence*. Dr. Dunbar Ingram, in his "History of the Union," quotes the passages in these letters expressing the individual approval of the writers, but passes over the fact that the very letters from which he quotes contain unmistakeable evidence that the Bishops did not represent the Catholic opinion of the country on the subject. Unionist speakers and writers to the *Times*, for the most part, take their facts concerning the Union from Dr. Ingram's book, and so the statement that the Catholics favoured the Union has gained extended currency, based on evidence which in fact refutes that assertion. The Catholics of Dublin opposed the Union throughout. Lord Cornwallis wrote to Major-General Ross, December 12, 1798:

"The opposition to the Union increases daily in and about Dublin, and I am afraid, from conversations which I have had with persons much connected with them, that I was too sanguine when I hoped for the good inclinations of the Catholics."—*Cornwallis Correspondence*, iii. 16.

A public meeting of Catholics was held in Dublin, January 13, 1800, to protest against the measure. The Guild of Merchants thanked their Roman Catholic fellow-citizens in Dublin for their manly and patriotic conduct. The Corporation of Cutlers and Stationers (23rd January, 1800), expressed their "great pleasure in seeing our Catholic fellow-citizens come forward at this momentous period." Through the country the Catholics repudiated the expressions of Catholics in favour of the Union as those of "partial and influenced" men. The Archbishop of Dublin, Dr.

The Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. [redacted] and Bishops [redacted] true [redacted] had [redacted] the [redacted] and [redacted] [redacted] would be removed when the Union had been carried. It is not surprising that the Bishops

should have yielded to the persuasions here inferred. But their letters establish beyond controversy that they were in no sense the leaders of or represented the Catholic opinion of Ireland. Dr. Bray, Catholic Archbishop of Cashel, writes to Dr. Troy, July 1, 1799 :

"I need not observe to you, who know so well the dispositions of our respectable Catholics, what little influence we have over them in political matters, and with what reserve and secrecy we should interfere in the present occasion in order to insure any degree of success to it and to avoid censure."

The Rev. Dr. Plunkett, Bishop of Meath, writes to Lord Castlereagh, October 29, 1799 :

"The motives which your Lordship assigns to induce the Roman Catholics of Ireland to address in favour of a legislative union with Great Britain are strong and forcible On the part of the Roman Catholic clergy there is no obstacle to the wish expressed by your Lordship. *The obstacle is on the part of the inhabitants of this country in general.*"

In the appendix I have given the important portions of the Bishop's letters. It will be seen how absolutely misleading a selection of their individual expressions in favour of the Union is, as evidence of the Catholic opinions of the time.*

But, notwithstanding the opposition of the country, the Government held on, the ministers refused to resign, and deliberately proceeded to corrupt and pack the Parliament till they had secured a majority that would give a semblance of legality to the plunder of the constitution ; the possible resistance of the people had been provided for, the country was under military occupation—their liberties at the disposal of martial law. In the words of Mr. Lecky :—

"In the case of Ireland, as truly as in the case of Poland, a National constitution was destroyed by a foreign Power, contrary to the wishes of the people. In the one case the deed was a crime of violence ; in the other it was a crime of treachery and corruption."—(*Leaders of Public Opinion in Ireland*, p. 182).

Let us add the confirmation of the writer's matured opinion :—

* Much evidence on the attitude of the Catholics and country generally at the time of the Union is collected in "*Two Centuries of Irish History*," Part II.

A P P E N D I X .

The following letters of Lord Cornwallis, quoted at pages 8 and 9, are worth giving in full :—

Marquis of Cornwallis to Major-General Ross.

DUBLIN CASTLE, *July 24, 1798.*

DEAR ROSS,—The overt rebellion is certainly declining, and the principal leaders in Kildare have surrendered with a stipulation for their lives only, but the whole country is in such a state that I feel frightened and ashamed whenever I consider that I am looked upon as being at the head of it. Except in the instances of the six state trials that are going on here, there is no law either in town or country but martial law, and you know enough of that to see all the horrors of it, even in the best administration of it; judge, then, how it must be conducted by Irishmen, heated with passion and revenge. But all this is trifling compared to the numberless murders that are hourly committed by our people without any process or examination whatever. The Yeomanry are in the style of the Loyalists in America, only much more numerous and powerful, and a thousand times more ferocious. These men have saved the country, but they now take the lead in rapine and murder. The Irish militia, with few officers, and those chiefly of the worst kind, follow closely on the heels of the Yeomanry in murder and every kind of atrocity, and the Fencibles take a share, although much behindhand with the others. The feeble outrages, burnings, and murders which are still committed by the rebels serve to keep up the sanguinary disposition on our side; and as long as they furnish a pretext for our parties going in quest of them, I see no prospect of amendment.

The conversation of the principal persons of the country all tend to encourage this system of blood, and the conversation even at my table, where you will suppose I do all I can to prevent it, always turns on hanging, shooting, burning, etc., etc.; and if a priest has been put to death the greatest joy is expressed by the whole company. So much for Ireland and my wretched situation.

Believe me, etc.,

CORNWALLIS.

—(*Cornwallis Correspondence*, Vol. ii., p. 370).

Marquis Cornwallis to Major-General Ross.

PHENIX PARK, *Nov. 16, 1799.*

DEAR SIR,—I have not had time to acknowledge the receipt of your letters, dated the 31st, 1st, and 9th. Matters are here going on pretty well; my government is certainly not unpopular in the country at large, and I have done some small matters to assist the capital against our threatened famine that will, I think, take off a good deal of the asperity

of the mob-opposition to our great measure. The greatest difficulty which I experienced is to control the violence of our loyal friends, who would, if I did not keep the strictest hand upon them, convert the system of martial law (which, God knows, is of itself bad enough) into a more violent and intolerable tyranny than that of Robespierre. The vilest informers are hunted out from the prisons to attack, by the most barefaced perjury, the lives of all who are suspected of being, or of having been, disaffected; and, indeed, every Roman Catholic of influence is in great danger. You will have seen by the addresses both in the North and South that my attempt to moderate that violence and cruelty which has once driven, and which, if tolerated, must again soon drive, this wretched country into rebellion, is not reprobated by the voice of the country, although it has appeared so culpable in the eyes of the absentees. I am told that I am to receive immediately the 15th, 16th, 36th, 46th, 52nd, and 62nd regiments, making upwards of 8,000 men, and a detachment of about 1,200 men who have been transferred from the militia to the guards. How these latter are to be commanded I know not, but I should suspect that it will not be in a manner to make them very efficient.

* * * * *

I am, my dear Ross, most truly yours,

CORNWALLIS.

—(*Cornwallis Correspondence*, Vol. iii. 144).

[The portion omitted does not refer to Ireland].

Letters of the Catholic Archbishops and Bishops referred to at page 14.

Dr. Bray, Archbishop of Cashel, to Dr. Troy, Archbishop of Dublin.

THURLES, July 1, 1799.

MY DEAR DOCTOR,—I received the letter with which you favoured me at the request of Lord Castlereagh, expressing his hope that I will discreetly exert my influence in the counties of Tipperary and Waterford to procure the signatures of respectable Catholics to an address in favour of a legislative union between this kingdom and Great Britain.

I need not observe to you, who know so well the dispositions of our respectable Catholics, what little influence we have over them in political matters, and with what reserve and secrecy we should interfere on the present occasion in order to ensure any degree of success to it and to avoid censure.

If we act in any ostensible capacity in the business of union, either by personal signature to an address in favour of it, or otherwise, in my humble opinion, instead of serving the cause, we may injure it. As far as I understand the measure, it will be productive of substantial benefits to both countries, and, therefore, it meets my good wishes, and shall have the whole of my little mite of assistance, but with due attention to the necessary cautions and hints so wisely suggested by Lord Castlereagh.

I remain, etc.,

THOMAS BRAY.

—(*Castlereagh Correspondence*, Vol. iii., p. 344).

Dr. Dillon, Archbishop of Tuam, to Dr. Troy.

CONG, July 9, 1799.

MOST REV. AND DEAR SIR,—On receipt of your last letter I wrote to Dr. Reilly and to Dr. Bray, formerly my Metropolitan, whom I am in the habit of consulting on every important occasion, to request their advice, etc. . . . Dr. Reilly is of opinion that I should sign the resolutions. I perceive, however, that by such a step I should draw upon myself the censure of a large portion of the inhabitants of this diocese, and I am certain that our Bishops could more effectually promote any great measure which the Government may adopt for the benefit of our country by not appearing so publicly to take an active part in the present political contest.

It would only give a handle to the enemies of subordination, who have already endeavoured to counteract any little exertions which I may have employed to bring back the people to a sense of their duty by styling me an Orange Bishop, the tool of Government, well paid for my services, etc. These considerations, together with the difficulties in which, by such a precedent, I should probably involve some of our brethren more immediately exposed to the wrath of our enemies than I am, have left me wavering and uncertain for many days. Supported, however, by your sanction and that of Dr. Reilly, I think I may venture to request of your Lordship to sign it for me.

* * * * *

I have the honour to be, etc.,

EDWARD DILLON.

—(*Castlereagh Correspondence*, Vol. ii., p. 347).

It is right to mention that Dr. Dillon writes, September 1st, in a more encouraging tone. He says: "I feel myself each day less shy of publicly declaring my sentiments and wishes relative to the Union. I have had an opportunity, in the course of the parochial visitation of this diocese, which is nearly finished, of observing how little averse the public mind is to that measure." It is impossible to believe that the "public mind" in such remote parts of the country as Mayo, Galway, and Roscommon the Archbishop's diocese, could have greatly changed within a space of *less than two months*. The explanation of the letter is to be found in the letter itself. It is a letter of apology for not attending a county Galway meeting. He says: "Had I been in due time acquainted with the wishes of Lord Castlereagh, I would certainly have attended the county Galway meeting, though I must confess I should have felt out of my sphere in a meeting of that description."—*Castlereagh Correspondence*, Vol. ii., p. 386.

In this passage we read the pressure of the Castle, not a change of the "public mind." It is plain the Archbishop had been taken to task for not attending the Galway meeting; hence, when apologising for not doing so, he naturally adds some "smooth words," and no doubt magnified in

his mind what were but chance expressions in conversation with a "Government Bishop" into evidence of change of opinion favourable to the Union.

Dr. Plunkett, Bishop of Meath, to Lord Castlereagh.

NAVAN, October 29, 1799.

MY LORD,—I am but lately returned from my annual visitation, etc.

The motives which your Lordship assigns to induce the Roman Catholics of Ireland to address in favour of a legislative union with Great Britain are strong and forcible. They have often occurred to me these few months past, and have made a deep impression on my mind.

The sketch which accompanies your Lordship's letter of an address to be founded on these motives conveys a clear outline of the substance of what ought to be said on the occasion. On the part of the Roman Catholic clergy there is no obstacle to the wish expressed by your Lordship. The obstacle is on the part of the inhabitants of this county in general.

The Roman Catholics of Meath are too near Dublin, and too much accustomed to listen to the opinions of the Protestants at Meath, to be as yet willing to declare in favour of the Union. They are not strangers to the principal arguments used to oppose it, and many of them believe these arguments to be unanswerable.

The clergy depend upon the people, and they say here they would act imprudently did they wound the feelings of their respective flocks by stepping beyond their own sphere, and abetting a system to which the people are not yet reconciled. "We cannot separate from our parishioners," add they. "In political questions, it becomes us rather to follow than to lead." To this kind of reasoning, my Lord, I must confess it is not easy to reply.

For my part, I will heartily join the Roman Catholics of Meath the instant they will show a disposition to declare in favour of the Union. Until then, your Lordship perceives I must content myself with defending and supporting the measure when opportunities offer of doing so with advantage.

I have the honour to be, etc.,

C. J. PLUNKETT.

—(*Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii., p. 437).

Dr. Moylan, Bishop of Cork, writes in a very hopeful spirit. But his discernment may be judged by the assertion that the Union was becoming less unpopular in Dublin, and that he was "persuaded that the Roman Catholic inhabitants will in time testify their approbation of it." On the contrary, they opposed it to the end. A further passage is worth quoting from the Bishop of Cork's letter. It explains the action of the clergy, and the words in italics point to the *unpopular* position they had taken up:—"The provision intended to be made for the Roman Catholic clergy of this kingdom is a measure worthy an enlightened Government, and we cannot but be thankful for it. I apprehend, however, that it will not serve to preserve and strengthen their influence over these

poor people unless something be done, at the same time, for their relief. Their enemies, and the enemies of the peace and good order of the country, would avail of it to estrange the minds of the poor people from us by insinuating to them (as it appears by the report of the Secret Committee they did before) that we were pensioned by Government to *support its measures against the people*, and that we attended only to our own interests, without any attention to their miseries and distress."—*Castlereagh Correspondence*, ii., 401).

The Irish Question.

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